

Alzheimer's Disease Deaths

[Announcer] This program is presented by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

Hi, I'm Dr. Christopher Taylor with CDC's Alzheimer's Disease and Healthy Aging Program.

Alzheimer's disease is a fatal form of dementia and the sixth most common cause of death for Americans. It's an irreversible, progressive brain disorder that slowly destroys memory, thinking, and problem solving, and can affect even simple tasks, such as bathing, eating, and moving around the house.

Many people believe that memory problems are an inevitable part of aging, but that isn't true. Memory and cognitive problems, like those associated with Alzheimer's disease, aren't normal. Alzheimer's disease mainly affects older adults. For most people who have it, symptoms first appear in their mid-60s.

It is believed that Alzheimer's disease develops over many years and is probably caused by a combination of genetic, environmental, and lifestyle factors. Symptoms include memory issues, difficulty finding words, vision issues, and impaired reasoning or judgment.

Some medications can treat the symptoms of Alzheimer's disease, but the effectiveness varies from person to person. There is no cure at this time, but scientists worldwide continue to search for ways to prevent, treat, and cure Alzheimer's disease.

As Alzheimer's disease progresses, caregiving is a basic need. It's estimated that more than 15 million Americans provide unpaid care for people with Alzheimer's disease or other dementias. Most caregivers and their patients would benefit from interventions, such as education, respite care, and case management.

CDC encourages anyone who has memory issues to see a physician who can diagnose dementias, including Alzheimer's disease. Early diagnosis allows a person and their family to work with medical professionals to plan for medical needs and caregiving.

The CDC Healthy Aging website, at cdc.gov/aging, has a number of resources to help people learn more about the health of older Americans, including Alzheimer's disease and caregiving. The Alzheimer's Association website, alz.org, has information on living with Alzheimer's disease and caregiving resources, as well as information on services available in local areas, such as support groups and educational workshops.

[Announcer] For the most accurate health information, visit www.cdc.gov or call 1-800-CDC-INFO.